



Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road
Berwyn Heights, MD 20740
Tel. (301) 474-5000
Fax (301) 474-5002

MAYOR
Amanda M. Dewey
COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)
Christopher S. Brittan Powell
Jason W. Papanikolas
Ethan D. Sweep

Worksession Minutes July 20, 2020 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to comment by telephone and email.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Christopher Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas, and Ethan Sweep. Also present were outgoing Town Manager (TM) Maria Broadbent, Interim Town Manager Laura Allen, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Lieutenant Daniel Unger, Code Compliance Director Hollyce Goodwin, Public Works Clerk Rosalie Jones, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez and Town Clerk Kerstin Harper.

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey announced that Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) has announced its plans for the next school year which will begin with distanced learning likely until February 2021. This worksession will be TM Broadbent's last meeting in Berwyn Heights before she moves to Massachusetts. CM Papanikolas will field telephone calls tonight.

2. Ceremonial Items

Longevity award for Sgt. Moroney: Chief Antolik congratulated Sgt. Moroney on his 30th year of service with the Town and awarded him a certificate of appreciation.

Meritorious Service Award for Pfc. Rufino: Lt. Unger said he nominated Officer Rufino for the *Meritorious Service Award* for providing crucial assistance in the arrest of four armed robbers. New Carrollton police had initiated the pursuit of the four suspects following a spree of armed robberies in Prince George's County, but were immobilized by an accident. Pfc Rufino and Cpl. Hollowell intercepted the suspect vehicle on Greenbelt Road and pursued them onto the BWI Parkway. Only Officer Rufino was able to keep up and reported the direction in which the perpetrators fled on foot after their vehicle clipped a tow truck and flipped over. As a result, the suspects were arrested. Her actions demonstrated courage and quick thinking.

3. Discussion Items

Project tracking: Mayor Dewey and TM Broadbent explained that staff has provided periodic updates on projects associated with implementing the Council's priorities. The last update was provided in late February with the presentation of enhancement requests for the FY 2021 budget. Tonight, staff are requested to give another update prior to Interim Town Manager Allen coming on board.

Treasurer Rodriguez, Code Compliance Director Goodwin, Clerk Harper, Public Works Administrative Assistant Jones, and Chief Antolik reported on the projects assigned to them. A number of projects have been put on hold or delayed due to the COVID-19 health emergency. Others were necessitated by the state of emergency, including electronic payment processing, a CARES Act application for reimbursement of COVID-19 related expenses, and a vote by mail election.

A number of projects were funded as enhancements in the FY 2021 budget. These include:

Administration:

- Codification of Town Charter and Ordinances
- BHTV HiDef upgrade

Public Works:

- Acquisition of a new refuse truck, heavy duty dump truck, and leaf vacuum machine all funded from vehicle replacement reserve
- Replacement of a storage tent with CONEX container
- Upgrades to overhead doors and ceiling insulation in storage building
- Street repaving in coordination with WSSC water main replacement project
- Walkable, Bikeable Berwyn Heights (WBBH) task force recommendations

Police Department:

- Purchase 1 new hybrid police vehicle
- Language pay for Spanish speaking staff
- Purchase new ballistic vests
- Mobile police radio
- Purchase new NW/EP trailer.

A review of BHPD's use of force policy was added to the project list after the eruption of the George Floyd protests. The policy was found to be up to date but may be amended as new federal regulations are adopted. Chief Antolik and TM Broadbent will discuss assigning responsibility for coordinating a police station feasibility study.

Police use of force policy: Mayor Dewey said during the previous meeting the Council took an inventory of BHPD's use of force policy and found that it contains most of the policing reforms being recommended in the wake of the George Floyd protests. The conversation continues tonight as part of the Council's effort to build community trust.

Chief Antolik and Lt. Unger responded to Council questions as follows:

- BHPD has a duty to intervene if an agency with which BHPD has an MOU of mutual assistance uses excessive force, regardless of where the incident occurs.
- BHPD has no policy on no-knock warrants because it does not carry out such warrants. They are usually assigned to tactical or SWAT teams. BHPD can draft a provision on the types of warrants served by BHPD for inclusion in the policy.
- The process for hiring new officers is long-standing practice. Chief Antolik will check if it is set down in the Standard Operating Procedures and/ or in BHPD's guide for new recruits.
- BHPD's current use of force policy does not require reports on threatening the use of force.
- The use of force is reviewed throughout the fiscal year. If new recommendations from the Maryland Training Commission or other agency are released, they will be added to the manual.
- BHPD's use of force policy has a provision that allows use of force normally prohibited by the policy if an officer's or another's life is in danger. Chief Antolik said this is standard practice and he does not believe it exposes BHPD to lawsuits.

Mayor Dewey encouraged residents to ask questions about the policy and offer ideas and comments. She also noted that BHPD will take part in a virtual reality training exercise at the University of Maryland that includes a customized implicit bias training based on the results of the simulations. The program is paid through a foundation grant that may also provide funding for certain community policing initiatives.

Pop's Park/ facilities COVID plans: Mayor Dewey said that Park & Planning reopened their playgrounds, including Indian Creek Park, on July 1. The Town plans to open Pop's Park once signs with safety guidelines have been received and posted. She believes social distancing mandates are more sustainable if people are given some options for relatively safe social activities.

TM Broadbent said the signs to be posted will say that patrons use the park at their own risk, to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people and to wear masks. The Town plans to monitor the park and may close it again if patrons are not acting responsibly. In the big picture, she does not anticipate any changes in the use of Town facilities and delivery of services until the fall. The only service the Town does not currently provide are interior rental inspections.

In discussion, it was suggested that BHPD and Code officers regularly check on the park and report back to the Town Manager, that the Code Department look into rental inspection via video; and that the Town office be open by appointment. There was agreement that residents can access most Town services they need remotely by phone, email, or video conferencing. Internally, staff coordinate on regular basis to ensure continuous operations.

Electronic newsletter: Mayor Dewey said the previous Council started a mid-monthly newsletter to develop new formats for communicating with residents apart from the Bulletin. For various reasons, the newsletter stopped after 7 months and no longer exists. Residents have expressed their desire for more up-to-date information in a Town survey the Council conducted last year. Some type of email news service was mentioned repeatedly. The Council is requested to share any ideas about additional modes of communication with residents.

After some discussion, it was agreed that:

- Mayor Dewey contact a group of UMD students who have developed an interface for setting up an electronic email list as part of the campus-community connection (c3) program.
- Public Information Aide, once hired, to coordinate newsletter sent to a list of subscribers.
- Clerk Harper to provide list of subscribers to the defunct mid-monthly newsletter.
- MPT Kulpa-Eddy to provide regular drafts of a newsletter for the Council's review. Recreation Council, PTA and other Town groups would be invited to contribute.
- E-newsletter to be simple, short and released bi-monthly. Repetition or duplication of information in other formats is a plus.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy noted that County Councilmember At-Large Calvin Hawkins asked whether the Town would publish news from his office in the Bulletin. The Council discussed the issue and agreed to publish only the contact information for elected officials that represent Town residents. Clerk Harper drafted a list of representatives and their contact information for the August Bulletin. After some discussion, the Council agreed not to publish news items from the representatives in the Bulletin, unless they wish to pay for an ad. As an alternative, important news items from the representatives could be shared in the electronic newsletter.

Resolution 11-2020 acceptance of grants and donations: Mayor Dewey explained that the Council desires to create a policy that governs receipt of high value donations or grants. The policy would require that acquisitions valued over \$10,000 as well as acquisitions that are novel or unusual in nature be submitted to the Council for approval. TM Broadbent added that she drafted the policy based on the purchasing policies found in the Town's code. This means whenever the Town receives a substantial donation or grant the Council reviews it and amends the budget to show the dollar value received as well as to appropriate the funds to be expended.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- \$10,000 value is a good cut-off line for requiring Council approval
- Meaning of "novel in nature" to be clarified by providing a definition or examples
- Guidance to staff, such as a reporting form, could be created explaining what is meant by 'novel', or 'unprecedented', but not make the policy itself too specific

The discussion is to be continued at upcoming worksessions.

4. Minutes

There were none.

5. Department Reports

Mayor Dewey reported that the Council continues to work on a use of force policy and is receiving citizen input. On July 24, Berwyn Heights will host a Four Cities meeting. Anyone wishing to participate can sign up on an online form linked from the Town website. The Low Impact Development Center is working with the Town on a concept design for improving Pops' Park. Public input is requested via an online survey, a link to which is published on the website and signs at the park.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reminded everyone that Census field workers will start knocking on doors in August, but people are still encouraged to respond online or by phone. A draft environmental impact study has been released for the I-495/ I-270 widening, on which people can comment. MPT Kulpa-Eddy also announced upcoming meetings and events.

CM Papanikolas reported that a new Facebook page has been created where residents can connect with local businesses and restaurants they may want to support.

CM Brittan Powell reported that he has had conversations with the Code Director. The Code Department is operating normally.

CM Sweep mentioned a compost collection site for residents has been set up behind the Town Office.

6. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the upcoming schedule. No changes were made.

7. Citizen Comments

There were none.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk